

Tennessee Pollution Prevention Partnership Success Story



McDonald Elementary
8120 McDonald Road
Mohawk, TN 37810
423-235-5406

<http://pages.xtn.net/~mcdonald/>



1-800-734-3619
www.tdec.net/dca/tp3.htm

McDonald Students Put Waste in its Place

The Member

McDonald is a small rural K-8 school in Greene County with an enrollment of approximately 365 students. The campus includes a small wooded area. There are no ponds or streams on the site. The students, staff, and administration of McDonald School embrace the belief that pollution prevention and cleanup is everybody's responsibility. God has made man the caretaker of the earth. We believe in responsible stewardship through recycling, hazardous and household waste management, energy, land and water conservation, and the reduction of air pollution.



The Story

For years all of our school trash was going into the dumpsters bound for the landfill. When landfill space became an issue in 1988, an area scrap iron company furnished a large bin, located 25 minutes from school, with sections for glass, plastic, newspapers, and aluminum. Pat Carpenter, science teacher and sponsor of the McDonald TSAP Club (Tennessee Students Against Pollution), initiated a competition among classrooms to see which class could bring in the most recyclables and then transported them to the bins in town. People in the community began bringing hundreds of recyclables to the school. In 1995, a convenience center was established right across from the school, allowing the TSAP club to promote recycling of additional items – mixed paper, phone books, and steel cans. Club members also began to teach lessons to grades K-6 about what items should not be going into a landfill – yard waste, hazardous waste, and recyclables. As some grant money became available, the club

decided to go a step farther and buy recycled products. We continue to “close the loop” by purchasing items for our *Recycled Park*, located in the wooded area on our campus.

The TSAP Club also promotes America Recycles Day (ARD) with a month-long competition to collect recyclables and ARD Pledges from school families. Letters are sent home to parents, asking for a sincere commitment to recycle at home by signing the ARD Pledge. Students earn 5 points for turning in a Pledge, 2 points for each aluminum can, and 1 point for any other recyclable item. The money collected from recycling aluminum pays for prizes for the contest winners. The ARD competition has spread interest in recycling among all the students and diverted thousands of recyclable items from the landfill. McDonald students have great admiration for their TSAP Club and cannot wait to be in the 7th grade so they can be active members!

The Success

McDonald School has gone from being unknown in environmental efforts to a school recognized by various environmental organizations across the state. Pat Carpenter displays 46 awards on the wall outside her classroom from Keep America Beautiful, Department of Transportation, Department of Environment and Conservation, Tennessee Environmental Education Association, Eastman's Good Sports Always Recycle, and others. These recognitions have played a major role in instilling pride in the community and a desire to keep the school grounds litter-free. McDonald School has recycled unknown tons of mixed paper, aluminum and steel cans, plastics, and cardboard since 1988.

The Pollution Prevented

In the 2001-2002 school year, just during the month-long America Recycles Day campaign, the school diverted 10,848 aluminum cans, 3,763 newspapers, 2000 plastic bottles, 5,857 six-pack rings, and 100 printer cartridges from the landfill. Recycling creates less pollution and uses less energy than mining, transporting, and manufacturing products from virgin materials, and conserves precious natural resources as well.

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